

Ideas of alternative options to stop crime in society

[Law](#), [Crime](#)



The main purpose of this paper is to outcold challenge the prison system and begin to promote ideas of alternative options to stop crime in our society. It will dissect the hows and whys we began the prison system and how effective it is today, discuss the effects of mass incarceration, how prison funds must be better distributed and the lifetime effects of becoming a felon.

As our nation officially becomes the country with the biggest incarcerated population in the world, we must ask ourselves if the system is outdated or just straight faulty. With a whopping 2.3 million people behind bars, an equivalent amount that occupy the cities of Miami Florida, Las Vegas Nevada, Atlanta Georgia and Detroit Michigan COMBINED, it is important to understand that this is a massive issue and the whole system needs to be questioned. How is it that approximately two out of three released prisoners return to prison within 2 years? Aren't jails supposed to rehabilitate? Or are prisons just meant to be a place for punishment?

To be able to grasp the way the prison system works, we must break down the four reasons why the prison system was even created in the first place. Prisons have four major purposes. These purposes are retribution, incapacitation, deterrence and rehabilitation. Retribution means punishment for crimes against society. Depriving criminals of their freedom and containing them in cells is a way of making them pay a debt to society for their crimes. Incapacitation refers to the extraction of criminals from society so that they can no longer cause harm to innocent people. Deterrence means the prevention of future crime. It is presumed that prisons provide a warning to people who are thinking of committing crimes, and the potential

of going to prison will discourage people from breaking the law.

Rehabilitation refers to activities constructed to change criminals into law abiding citizens.

These four base pillars are the reasoning behind all of the decisions made in the imprisonment system. If all four pillars are not treated equally, the structure will become uneven and will eventually break. After evaluating each step, it can be seen there is one pillar that does not receive as much attention as the other pillars. This pillar being, rehabilitation. Rehabilitation should be the ultimate goal of the prison system. If you are not able to turn a criminal into a law abiding citizen, then the system has not done its job and there is no point of releasing the subject after he “ serves his time”. He will just keep committing crimes and end up incarcerated again. Over the last couple of years, there has been a grand escalation of inmates. In between 1980 and 2010 there has been an increase of 460% inmates even though the US. Population has only grown by about 35%. These times were called the “ Mass incarceration era”. With a total of 2. 3 million people incarcerated today, and having roughly only two out of three released prisoners returning to jail, it is undeniable that rehabilitation continues to be unsuccessful.

Now that the basis behind the prison system can be better understood, it can now be discussed how a prison system is actually funded. Taxpayer dollars are what funds these prisons and having an increase in inmates means having an increase in spending. Currently the budget of the incarceration system is costing taxpayers approximately 80 billion dollars a year. This means on average, the cost of handling each inmate is about \$31, 286 per

year, with some states like New York and California averaging at 60,000 and 70,000 dollars per year. In California, the cost per inmate per year is the equivalent of paying for a tuition at Harvard University plus a brand new Honda Civic every year. With such massive costs and having the majority of inmates return to jail, it is hard not to believe that the system has room for improvement.

In efforts to improve the rehabilitation system, collected funds could be reallocated in a more productive way. It is believed that there is a correlation between crime and lack of education. Thus, these funds could be put towards giving inmates a richer education, considering “68% of State prison inmates did not receive a high school diploma” (Caroline Wolf Harlow 2003).

Having seen such a large increase in inmates, it is important to analyze what the majority of these people did to place themselves in a jail system and what rights they lost as a result. A 2012 study shows that Federal and State prisons are composed on average by “47.7% Violent offenders, 17.1% Property offenders, 20.5% Drug offenders, 13.8% Public-order offenders and 0.7% Other”, resulting in a total of 1.5 million felons a year (Incarcerated Felon Population by Type of Crime Committed, 2014).

Drug offenders can come to a total 309,000 people. That's more than the entire city of Tampa. In Florida, one can be charged with a felony by having just 20 grams of marijuana in his/her possession. With just 20g of marijuana in your possession, you can become a felon for life.

Strong measures are put into place to accomplish Retribution, one of the pillars of the prison system, to make inmates pay their “ debt” to society. A few examples of the things felons lose are:

Their voting rights: Most states prohibit felons from voting while they are currently incarcerated. Upon receiving parole or completing their sentences, many convicted felons find that it is more difficult to vote than it was before. Some states ban felons from voting for a certain period of time after their release while others ban felons for life.

Their ability to travel abroad: While felons are legally allowed to hold and use U. S. Passports, there are certain travel restrictions that may be levied by other countries. A visa is a right, not a privilege, and a country may choose to deny admission to a convicted felon.

Employment rights: Many private employers will conduct background checks and choose not to hire felons. They are allowed to discriminate in this way, but it is not a requirement. However, certain public positions bar felons from taking employment. These include employment with the U. S. Armed Forces, law enforcement agencies, teachers, child care professionals and many jobs that require a professional license.

Public social benefits: In addition to not being allowed to serve on a jury in most states, convicted felons are not allowed to apply for federal or state grants, live in public housing, or receive federal cash assistance, SSI or food stamps, among other benefits. Convicted felons also see their parental rights diminish, especially in the case of custody battles or divorces.

In addition to all of these lost rights, a felony conviction is a permanent stain on a person's record. Even if these are not necessary lost rights, he or she may find difficulty getting a lease, applying for a loan or filing official paperwork in any capacity.

Having a total of 6.1 million felons total in the U. S. A, it is urgent we re-evaluate why the jail system is in place and if it's working the way it was intended. We are overspending and under achieving, the main pillar of rehabilitation is not being properly achieved and cruel and unusual punishments are given to inmates. The majority of felons do deserve to be in prison and receive punishments to their fullest extent, but there are also hundred and thousands of people's lives that are being ruined for crimes that do not endanger our society. Overall, it would be beneficial to look over every aspect of the prison system and make sure that it is indeed beneficial to society as a whole.

Important Stats to Know

There is a disproportionate amount of black inmates in America. There are 224 Million White people in the USA and 45.5 million African American people in the USA. Yet, the majority of inmates are african americans. "There are 897k of Whites in Jail which is 39% of the incarcerated population. There are 920k African Americans in jail which is 40% of the incarcerated population"(Leah Sakkala 2014). There are almost as much as 500% more Whites in the USA, but there are more African americans in jail and poverty is not the reason why. There are far more white people living in poverty.

27million white people live below the poverty line, while 11. 4 million black people live below the poverty line. It can be thought that African Americans are racially targeted.